

**01-HALÁNÈ-720 TASHAL, KALDOR**

2<sup>ND</sup> WATCH [COLD, CLOUDY, NORTHWEST STORM, HEAVY RAIN]  
Just as you are rousing yourselves and preparing to break your fast, there is a knock at the door – the same scene is repeated all over town and at the same time. Answering the door, you find a messenger with an invitation for dinner this evening at the start of the fifth watch – those who cannot read, the messenger reads it for you. Directions are given to the mansion of your host, Lord Worton Harabor. The messenger tells you he is not at liberty to tell you any details about his liege or what he knows of you.

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Rikoro takes the letter and thanks the messenger offering a two farthing tip for the delivery. After reading the message he says under his breath "Lord Worton Harabor? .. interesting". He spends the rest of the day at his job and come evening prepares himself for the meeting by bathing, trimming his beard and trying to clean up his clothes.

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As Berina reads the message, Davas looks a little bewildered. Then his eyes focus and he shakes his head. "Harabor ... lord Harabor ... do we know him? ... Why would he want to see " he indicates himself "us?"

With a concerned look, he begins to pace slowly "Gods ... I hope we haven't offended someone else !"

He stops, turns to Berina and sighs "oh well ... how bad can it be? Surely we wouldn't get an invitation if we had ... and even then ... the condemned ate a hearty meal?" He grins. "I had best clean my clothes ... and get a fire going to dry them in time".

Berina says, "I believe you've met one of his relatives...Sir Maldan Harabor, Sheriff of Meselyneshire. You know, the Sheriff who governs Olokand. I'll ask Lord Odasart about this. In any case, we'll have to go. When a noble 'invites' a commoner to something, it's really a command."

That day at work, Berina informs Lord Odasart and says: "This is most unusual...at least for me, Milord. I'm not used to high nobles inviting a commoner like myself to dinner. I don't dare treat this as something I have the option of refusing, but as a command." Pausing for a moment, she continues: " I hope you'll forgive the impertinence, but I...I" she stammers "I think of you like the grandfather I never knew, and I don't want to get involved in something that may make problems for you. Please tell me it's OK." and the pleading in her eyes tells him of the feelings and loyalty she's developed for him.

"It is quite all right," Lord Odasart answers. "He invited you and the others at my advice and I received an invitation to the same dinner just this morning. Everything will be explained after the dinner and you can consider this to be one of those missions we said we would have for you from time to time."

"Thank you, milord." Berina says with obvious relief. After a moment's pause, she says: "Milord Odasart, you are, to my experience, by far and away the best noble there is, and I would become your vassal, if you'd have me, but I'm not sure I can. My husband-to-be, Davas of Fainovirs, is vassal to Lord Dasarayne

of Ovendel. I think I should talk to Davas about this first." She gets that shuffle-the-feet nervousness as she continues: "I am woefully uneducated when it comes to Lord-Vassal relationships...what's expected of whom, who gets what, who owes what, what's legal, what's not. I'm unsure if it's wise for a husband to be the vassal of one lord, and the wife the vassal of another...or if that's even legal. Please advise me on this."

"Well, where do I start?" Lord Odasart answers. "This is a troubled world and the only thing you can really rely on is a person's word. The liege/vassal relationship is a bargain between two people and has little to do with others. A lord may have many vassals and a vassal may have many lords – their primary allegiance being to their liege lord.

"The usual bargain is one of service in trade for protection. The townhouse you hold a lease on can be taken away from you without notice and without recourse to the law unless the landlord is also your liege lord. It is the same with the king's law. Your protection in vendetta law is the size of your clan. Your protection in the king's law is your liege. It is the same with any employment you have...you can loose your job without notice and without recourse unless your employer is your liege.

"If you become my vassal, the bargain I will offer is that I will be responsible for your actions in the king's court, I will ensure that your basic needs are met and I will ensure that employment is always available for when you want more than the basics. I cannot make the same assurances for others who are not my vassals, such as Davas. In return, you must pledge to pay for what I provide in service, kind or coin. Further, you must pledge to not cause any harm to my person, my property or my interests."

Berina says, "That sounds wonderful...I have no problem with any of it. I will still ask Davas about this first. If I were already his wife, I would be expected to seek his council before making any such arraignment, and I see no reason I shouldn't start right now. I will let you know as soon as Davas and I have talked." Pausing a moment in thought, she asks: "If I become your vassal before Davas and I marry, I'd have to get your permission first wouldn't I?"

"That is because marriage sometimes causes peoples' loyalties to change and a liege must know how that will effect his bargain with his vassal," answers Lord Odasart. "However, in this case I believe I know the two of you well enough that you can be sure of my permission when the time comes."

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Clutching the invitation in his hand, Isiel thanks the messenger, and then seeks out Mistress Bae, to get her opinion on the matter.

She tells him, "I know nothing of the matter but when one of the gentry invites you to dinner, you must go."

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Josrel asks the messenger: " Is my wife Lillia invited as well?"

"No, I am afraid not," answers the messenger.

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After the messenger has left Josrel says to Lillia " My dear it seems that I won't be home for dinner this evening. I have been summoned to Lord Worton Harabor for dinner this evening. I am sorry but I was informed that I was to come alone." Josrel kisses Lillia and hugs her tightly as her leaves for the courts.

Depending on the response Josrel informs Lillia either way that they or he alone is invited to Lord Harabor's mansion. Josrel also asks the Ibarti if he is aware of this invitation and if he has any insight on the matter.

"I know not of the matter," The Ibarti tells him. "My advice is to conduct yourself with decorum and learn what it is about when you are informed...as I am sure you will be."

Bowing to the Ibarti respectfully, Josrel says, "I have learned well from your teachings and my own errors. I will represent the Temple proudly."

Josrel will also inform the court incase his visit may result in a loss of work the following day.

Josrel will prepare his good priest's robe and bring along some parchment, quill and ink.

You find that all of your personal parchment has been used up.

On his way to the courts Josrel will pick up some parchment for the evenings meeting.

He finds parchment to currently be 25d 1f for each 15"x20" sheet.

## **1-HALÁNÈ-720 TASHAL, KALDOR**

5<sup>TH</sup> WATCH [COLD, CLOUDY, NORTHWEST STORM, HEAVY RAIN]  
You follow the directions and arrive at the manor at the appointed time. You are introduced to Lord Worton Harabor and find that he is comfortable dealing with the lower classes...perhaps that is due to, as you learn, him being the Innkeeper's and Taverner's Guildmaster for Tashal.

After being seated at your assigned places, you are served brie cheese with honey and mustard for an appetizer, rota (barley fruit soup), several courses of entrée [visorye (veal custard pie), lamproi (baked lamprey) or smalle byrdes (bird stuffed with dates and mustard)] accompanied by lemonhyt (lemon rice with almonds), wastel (first quality bread) and beer (very pale in color, rich fruity aroma, soft texture, sweetish malty flavor with slightly sweet aftertaste) and a dessert of damson (plum and currant tart).

After dinner, Lord Odasart gets everyone's attention and says, "Of what I am about to relate, some of you know bits and pieces but I doubt that any of you know all of it.

"At the beginning of this year, my associates and I became concerned with the lack of communication with the possible heirs to the throne. Lady Lussie Harabor and I gathered together some people to discretely investigate the matter starting with the absence of Earl Dariune of Kiban. They managed to save the Earl from the intrigues of his youngest son and that son has now been sent to the Chelmarch to regain his honor or die.

"That investigation revealed the next link in the chain of events, a rogue Shek P'var named Tesial of Holsare, who had been corresponding with the Earl's son. After tracking her all over the kingdom and beyond, she has been killed."

Berina glances at Davas as Lord Odasart says this.

Glances at Berina, grins a bit ... perhaps evilly? ... and nods once emphatically.

Lord Odasart continues, "During this time, I was introduced to Divlena of Laelin, a delightful Sindarin who I am informed is related to Isiel of Laelin. She was searching for the family responsible for her being sold into slavery and her parents being killed. Being raised by the Chelni as a slave, she never managed to learn the normal Sindarin custom of outliving her enemies – and besides, the Bastune clan seem to have an unreasonable hatred of the Laelin clan.

"Sir Erdais Bastune and Sir Anseri Walorn were close associates of Tesial and, after her defeat, they fled to Minarsas – although we believe they have changed their names and taken on new identities. Divlena had left Berina's company soon before this and we believe she has gone in the direction of Minarsas to seek her tormentor.

"Another accomplice who corresponded with Tesial was only known as Evida the Bearer of the Loam and, from all appearances, was Tesial's master. That person has fled from Kiban to Minarsas and has also changed their identity.

"A final piece of the puzzle, although we believe a minor one, is Armenton of Soril, who has developed a hatred of the Kyfa family and has fled to Minarsas. So, as you can see, there appears to be a gathering of our enemies in Minarsas.

"Lord Harabor..."

"Yes, quite," says Lord Harabor. "The Harabor clan is from Minarsas and a good number of them still reside there. Recently, there have been changes in the laws there that appear to be deliberately designed to enrage the Khuzdul, the Shek P'var and the temples. After discussing this with Lord Odasart, I have come to believe that Earl Declaen Caldeth is being influenced in these decisions by the enemies just mentioned or the organizations supporting them.

"The people gathered here are the ones he has told me are best able to discretely look into the matter and have a certain amount of self interest. So what support will you need to immediately travel to Minarsas and begin learning about the society there and the influences on the Earl? I believe that this must be resolved by the Minarsas Wool Faire in the spring to prevent open rebellion – or worse. I may be able to give you the name of one of my relations that is most likely to be trustworthy but when push comes to shove I know not which of them I can trust."

"Milord, if I may?" Berina says as she rises and bows to Lord Harabor. "Several things and questions. Davas and I have the lease on a townhouse, and a housekeeper in our employ. We would be loathe to give it up...although for the kingdom, I would give it up in a heartbeat. After all, if the kingdom is overthrown, what good is a townhouse...or anything else, for that matter?"

"That is between you and your landlord and has nothing to do with what we are discussing here," Lord Harabor says.

Berina says, "We would need some outward reason to go to Minarsas, and a means of support for however long we need to be there." Addressing Lord Odasart, Berina says: "Perhaps my work for you transcribing guild reports, and a temporary re-

location to Minarsas as a result of Davas' and my wedding, would provide a suitable cover. We will need people who know the local conditions and people. As Royal Weaponcrafter, do you know of a particularly trustworthy weaponcrafter in Minarsas you could put us in contact with...someone you could tell at least some of what has been said here tonight, and who will be discrete and help us at need?"

"I can guarantee the support of your housekeeper and your lease as that was the agreement when you got the lease," Lord Odasart answers, "but my authority does not go beyond Tashal and I know not the weaponcrafters in Minarsas. You will have to look for work to support yourselves while you are there."

Addressing Lord Harabor again, Berina says: "I haven't heard of any temple for Halea in Minarsas, but a town with so much trade going on in it, I'll bet there's a priestess operating there. I'll ask at the temple here. I'll just tell them that I'm going to Minarsas for a while, and that I'd like to be able to continue my worship of My Lady while I'm there. This has the advantage of being true." Smiling broadly, she says: "Believe me, if anyone knows what's going on in Minarsas, a priestess of Halea will know!"

"Milord, you mentioned that, among others, the local Shek P'var are being angered. If you could tell Rikoro and I who the local Shek P'var are, we could develop some contacts there as well."

"I have not their names at the moment," Lord Harabor answers, "but I can have them for you by the time you leave."

Berina says, "You also said, Milord, that laws have been changed to cause all of this trouble. Could you tell us just what these law changes are?"

"I know not the details but at least some of them have to do with taxes," answers Lord Harabor.

Berina says, "Sir Erdais Bastune, Sir Anseri Walorn, Evida the Bearer of the Loam, and Armenton of Soril. We know Armenton has been outlawed. May we assume the others are also outlawed and/or are wanted to stand before the King's justice?"

"I know of no such declaration so you may not assume that," Lord Harabor answers. "As far as I know they have not broken any of the King's laws. Whether they have been declared outlaw or not is up to the head of their clan."

Lord Odasart adds, "Anseri Walorn has been declared outlaw and is therefore no longer gentry. I can provide documents of his status, and that of Armenton of Soril, for your need. Sir Erdais Bastune has not been declared outlaw and it is unlikely his drunken sot of a father will do so."

Berina asks "What does the law permit us to do if we find them?"

"What does the law permit?!?" Lord Harabor says with a sputter.

With a slight smile Lord Odasart says, "While Berina is a citizen of Tashal and of Kaldor, she was raised elsewhere and often knows not the common customs." Turning to Berina, he continues, "The law does not 'permit' you to do anything to them, or anyone else. The law determines what happens after you have done what you will...the King's law if you break the King's peace and vendetta law, if you bring them harm, would

normally result in wergild or feud. Them being declared outlaw removes the aspect of vendetta law. However, it does not prevent them from gaining protection from associates so you should proceed with caution.

"That's all I can think of just now, Milord. Anyone else?" Berina asks and sits back down.

After Berina sits Josrel rises: "My Lord, I too am in a similar situation as Berina and Davas." Josrel's motions to the couple. "Recently married myself, under current employment to the courts through the Temple. If I may make mention to the Ibarti in Tashal that some Temples are acting inappropriate he can arrange for a transfer for me to Minarsas. Then I can look into the Temples to see if I can uncover something there." Josrel offers to Lord Harabor.

With a snort, Lord Harabor says to Lord Odasart, "Another one. Did you bring me people to help with a problem or did you bring me merchants?" Turning to Josrel, he continues, "I care not what your family and employment situations are. While I understand that as a priest your actions are answerable to your temple, I doubt they will continue to support you if it becomes known that you are unwilling to do what is required of you. Your temple has to deal with powerful and influential people just like other citizens of Kaldor. To answer your question, you may tell your superior what you will...as the person in charge of the temple of knowledge he no doubt knows it all already."

Watching the proceedings closely, Isiel nods in a few places, and looks completely perplexed in others as the conversation--or the vocabulary at least--goes over his head. But when Divlena is mentioned, he leans forward slightly, eyes bright. To the question put to all of them, he says, "I have mind to find my cousin. Those who wronged her, also did wrong me and mine. I can outlive, yes, and many of my people it would be so done. But I . . ."

Here, he smiles and shrugs his shoulders a little diffidently. "I will be helping much as I can, for these friends of Divlena did aid her when they are able. I can be going to Minarsas to work against your enemies; it is no matter."

"Thank you," says Lord Harabor. "You honor your people by your actions."

Berina stands again and bows to the Lords, saying to Lord Harabor: "I'm sorry if I said anything, out of ignorance, that may have offended you, Milord." Grinning ruefully, she continues: "I fear my mouth will see me to the end of a rope someday."

"Is there time for Davas and myself to get married? I'm with child, and prefer to not put it off for too long."

"It was my understanding that what prevents you getting married is finding clergy who will marry members of differing worship," says Lord Odasart. "I fear that will not be easily resolved so it will have to wait."

Berina says, "When are we to leave for Minarsas, and how are we to make the journey, Milord?"

"As soon as you can prepare since you will need all the time you can get to resolve this," says Lord Odasart. "As to how, I can

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provide funds for provisions along the way but you will not find any riverboats going that way this late in the year. You will have to go by foot."

Rikoro raises his tall frame up from his seated position after having listened to the others make their statements and inquires known. The Santa Mavaria addresses Lord's Odasart and Harabow with a bow before speaking in a steady sure voice, "I will gladly offer what aid I can my Lords. The fact that this 'Evida the Bearer of the Loam' as you mentioned is a rogue Shek- P'var is cause for concern enough and should be investigated immediately. Having not traveled on assignment before I will trust the others with the details, but my only question is - what do you wish us to do with the information we have gathered? Send it to you via messenger? And are we looking for evidence of a conspiracy or foul plot in order for action to be taken? I believe this is the case, but just wished to be certain."

"We have not said 'Evida the Bearer of the Loam' is a rogue Shek P'var," says Lord Harabor, "we have just said that the person communicated with a rogue Shek P'var who is now dead. If fact, we have no idea who the person is or what they intend. Even under normal circumstances, the Shek P'var are so secretive in their ways that outsiders seldom know what they are about."

With a slight smile, Lord Odasart says, "Knowing Berina as little as I do, I cannot imagine her sending off a messenger and waiting for instructions from far off Tashal. Once you find out the truth of what is going on, you will probably have little time to deal with it. Send a message if you can and stay within the law as much as you can but deal with the situation as best you can."

Rikoro nods once and bows slightly retaking his seat as he says, "Forgive me Lord Odasart, when you mentioned Evida was this Tesial's master I thought immediately they too were Shek-P'var, but the title can certainly have other meanings. That is all I wished to know, my thanks"

Rising again, Berina says: "Again, if I may, Milord? I think that we are all laboring under the assumption that the true purpose of our journey to Minarsas is to be kept in strictest secrecy, and that we'd each need some sort of plausible excuse to explain our presence there. That being the case, we'd need to arrange our affairs here in Tashal so that people who know us won't wonder aloud about our 'relocation' and risk having word precede us to Minarsas, allowing the Crown's enemies to go to ground. Is the assumption of secrecy incorrect?"

"Yes, as far as it goes," says Lord Harabor, "but few are those who keep track of the comings and goings of a bunch of commoners. To those who know you, you can tell them your acting as an agent for an unspecified buyer of Sorkin Blue mules, of vellum or of wool before the wool faire to find a good price. We can arrange to have you removed from your job and you can go to Minarsas to look for new work, if that is what is needed. There are many reasons to travel and I trust you can find one to fit your own situations."

One of the servants enters and speaks quietly to Lord Harabor. Lord Harabor then addresses the group and says, "The relative of mine that you can contact with discretion to communicate with

me is the ostler Donar of Harabor, sometimes called mule. I have not a name for the Shek P'var (as I mentioned, they are a secretive bunch) but you can make yourselves known to the apothecary Anesa of Fayrl. You will no doubt have to give her a secret handshake, a password or whatever vulgar sign they use to identify themselves with, but I trust you can deal with that as well.

"Now if there are no other questions, I believe we should call it a night so you can start your preparations early in the morning."

"Hmm. It's likely to take us a few days to prepare. It's a long trip to make in bad weather." Berina continues: "Qisse is making me a new dress that will expand as my pregnancy advances. I'll let her know that getting it done is first priority. She's good at what she does, so I feel that the dress will be ready very soon. I'll need to arrange an audience with Aramia Silena to ask for a contact in Minarsas. Supplies for use on the road will have to be gathered." Getting a regretful look on her face, she muses: "We lost our horse and shepard's wagon at Holdan. We sure could have used it now. Ah well. I will co-ordinate with the others, and when we're ready to go, I'll come to let you know, and get such funds as you're willing to provide. Thank you for all your support, Milord."

Turning to Rikoro, Josrel, Isiel, and Thrid, Berina says: "Bring those things you intend to take with you to Minarsas, to Davas' and my townhouse. That will get everything together in one place, and it'll all be safe there. We'll figure out how to carry it all. Also, shop for whatever else you think you'll need...and can afford...and drop that off at our place as well."

Turning to Josrel, Berina says: "I'm assuming that Lillia will be coming as well? I hope so. You guys are fine company, but it would be very nice to have another woman to travel with." and she gets a big grin.

Nodding to Berina, Josrel says: "I'm sure Lillia would love to come, travel to another town see some sites." Josrel smiles. "I will bring what things are needed to your townhouse, but first I will talk with the Ibarti and let him know what's going on. He may have some insight and may even transfer Lillia and myself to Minarsas if there is a Temple of Save-K'Nor there. Lillia and I will come by tomorrow evening and let you know what information we have come up with."

"You'll need to make arraignments regarding your townhouse as well." Addressing Lord Odasart again, she asks: "Milord, would it be possible for you to look after Josrel's and Lillia's townhouse as well as ours?"

"I was referring to the financial aspects," says Lord Odasart. "However, between my chamberlain and your housekeeper, I am sure they can see to it. Josrel can leave his keys with your housekeeper when he departs. Tell her to contact my chamberlain about what is needed."

The Khuzdul keeps quiet throughout most of the dinner and talking, gazing up and just taking in what is said. After Berina says her piece Thrid nods simply.

At the end he does finally speak up though, "M'lord, I bein apoligize for my speech as I be still learning, ja?" After a slight pause he says, "I be going ta help Berina and wherever be needin' for sure. I do 'ave small request though."

He looks about before speaking, "Where I be comin' from I be expected to be carryin' my weapons with me and have them handy in case of need, ja?" He shakes his head, "Here I be get in trouble for doing that same think, which make no sense to me, ja?" He takes a deep breath, "If we be travelin' to possible trouble, then I be needin' to carry my weapons within' no fear of bein' in trouble, can that be the case?"

Lord Odasart says, "I think you will find that in most of the larger communities of Kaldor people are expected to carry a single weapon to show their status but, walking around with more weapons than that makes them appear to be looking for trouble. The citizens and guards are even more suspicious of foreigners...er...those who are not a citizen of the city. I suspect it is the same in Adazmere but I could not say for certain since it has been awhile since I was there. I am certain that is the way of it in Olokand, Kiban and Tashal.

"In the countryside, people are expected to carry whatever weapons are necessary to protect themselves and those under their protection. The only time you will find any objections are from the very people that you need protection from. Occasionally, a knight will ask another for a friendly bout and much of vendetta law is resolved by trials of combat."

"I know not which category Minarsas falls in but it matters not as I would not have authority to say you can do other than what is in their laws. It may even be that you are allowed to carry whatever weapons you wish but, when trouble starts, they will offer no quarter and immediately accuse you of being the cause. You will all have to be careful how you conduct yourselves as I cannot be responsible for your actions and, even if I was, I would not be able to be able to provide help in time."

Once it becomes apparent that none of the others have any further questions for either of the Lords, Berina says: "Well, then. Milords, with your permission, we'd all best be leaving before we run afoul of curfew."

Thrid is quiet for the rest of the evening. After which he returns to the Spurs and informs the Innkeeper he'll be leaving in the morning. Thank him for the employment, room and board. Sleep there one final night, gather up his things and meet up with the rest of the group in the morning.

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On the way back to the townhouse, Berina says to Davas: "Tomorrow, I'll need to see my father, drop in on Jaril to instruct him on what I want done with my investment in the Garb and Flail, and arrange to see the Aramia. I'd like you to take such money as you'll need, and buy us some trail rations. Lord Odasart said he'll give us money for the journey...by which I think he means money for staying at inns along the way..., but I'm sure that we'll have to do some camping as well, and even with your foraging abilities, we'll need some rations just in case."

Giving Berina a quick cuddle and a quicker grin, Davas says "of course ... you know I am really looking forward to this ... but ..." he points at her belly "... is this a good idea?" Continuing quickly, he adds "I know, I know ... we have to do what lords

'suggest' ... but ... do you think this will be safe ... for you and " he gestures "...".

Berina says, "My love, nothing in life is ever truly safe. We women face death every time we get pregnant. During the birth, I could hemorrhage and bleed to death right there in the birthing bed. Or I could contract child-bed-fever...which is usually fatal. There are other things that could happen as well, but it's a risk I, and every woman before me, have been willing to take so that there may be generations to come after us...and out of our love for the men in our lives." and she kisses him deeply. "I'm fit and strong...I'll be alright. Worry if you must, but it is the way life is ordered...there is nothing we can do but let things run their course, and pray to the Gods and Goddesses."

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Upon returning from his meeting with Lord Harabor, Josrel says to Lillia: "Well my Dear, how would you like to see Minarsas? It seems that I have been called upon again to serve Kaldor, and Minarsas is where we will be going. The details I will inform you of later, but first I need to speak with the Ibarti about a few things to get myself ready. I suggest you think about what items you will need to travel, spare set of clothes, some food for the trip maybe some dried beef, some grains a pot to cook in. Again I will know better after I speak with the Ibarti."

Josrel smiles warmly at Lillia "What do you think would you like to see Minarsas?"

"That sounds lovely and yes I will go where you go but," she says, "where is Minarsas and by what route do we get there?"

Josrel takes Lillia in his arms and kisses her gently: "Don't worry about any of that my love, I will take of the particulars. Just worry yourself about getting ready. The house will be looked after by the Lord Odasart's Chamberlain and the housekeeper Quisse employed by Berina. We will leave the keys with Quisse when we leave."

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Upon returning to the townhouse, Berina says to Qisse: "Qisse, Lord Odasart is sending Davas and myself...along with Rikoro, Josrel, Isiel the Sindarin, and Thrid the Khuzdul...to Minarsas to look into some trouble there. Lord Odasart will be seeing to the maintenance of this townhouse and your pay until our return."

"The others will be dropping off things here that they're taking with them before we leave. We could be gone for months, but not longer than the next wool fair in Minarsas. What I'm getting at, is that I need you to finish up the dress you're making for me as soon as it's humanly possible. Davas can handle the cooking, and he and I can see to the chores. If you do nothing but work on the dress, how long until it's finished?"

"I can 'ave it finished by tomorrow darkmans arter wan more viddy wain ee break yer fast een de morning," answers Qisse.

Berina says, "Wonderful! One more thing. As we leave, Josrel and Lillia will be dropping off the key to their townhouse with you. Lord Odasart says that you will need to tell his chamberlain what needs to be done to take care of their townhouse while they're gone."

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Isiel makes his way back to Mistress Bae's where he thanks her for her generosity in employing him, but he is leaving Tashal in the morning and thus will no longer be able to work for her. In the morning, he gathers his belongings--all of them, since he has few, including the stick of charcoal he was allowed to take from her some time ago, for drawing--and makes his way to Berina's townhouse. On the way, he stops to purchase a few things for the journey, specifically two sheets of vellum and a warmer cloak or cowl of some kind--assuming Sindarin feel the cold like everyone else.

He finds vellum at 18d per 30"x40" sheet. He is unable to find a cloak and is told one would have to be custom made. The cowls he was able to find are: beaver (30d, Sk Nk), ermine (60d, Sk Nk), linen (9d, Sk Nk Sh), quilt (55d, Sk Nk Sh), sealskin (35d, Sk Nk), serge (15d, Sk Nk Sh), silk (111d, Sk Nk Sh), and worsted (80d, Sk Nk Sh).

Isiel buys two sheets of vellum, and tries to get a feel for which of the cowls (within his budget, so no more than 48d) will be the warmest and/or best protection as an addition to his cloak.

[OOC: As I said for Josrel, you'll need to tell me exactly what you write. I'll assume you write in a 12 point font and there are half inch margins. An 8"x11" sheet is 88 sq. inches minus the margins is 70 sq. inches of available writing space per page. You now have the equivalent of 2400 sq. inches of vellum resulting in 27 pages (or 1909 square inches) of writing space. Drawings will be twice the scale of graphics (e.g. maps are 1mm per 10 foot for local and 1mm per foot for interior when in graphics; 1mm per 5 feet for local and 1mm per 2 feet for interior when drawn freehand.)]

Not having enough time (or, likely, funds, for custom made, Isiel thanks the merchant and checks out the market to see if he can find anything better--priced or protection. If not, he will return to the merchant and buy the sealskin cowl.

In the market, the large cowls Isiel finds are linen (not for sale Sk Nk Sh), quilt (not for sale Sk Nk Sh), russet (78d Sk Nk Sh), and serge (13d Sk Nk Sh).

After taking his time looking over the selection, Isiel heads back to the merchant who had the sealskin cowl to buy that one.

"I am sorry but right after you left, somebody else came in and bought it," the shopkeeper tells him.

"Alas," Isiel says, and he looks genuinely disappointed. "Are you still having the *helvein*<sup>i</sup> one, the furry cowl, from the *lavan*, the..." He shakes his head in frustration, then forms two fingers into the shape of beaver's teeth in front of his mouth. "The animal with the teeth so?"

"Ah," he ponders, "yes, I do and since you were not able to get the other one you wanted, I will drop the price of the beaver skin cowl to 27d."

"I thank you, most kind," Isiel says, and buys the cowl from him, then heads toward Berina's townhouse.

\* \* \*

When Rikoro returns to the Mercantylers' guild that evening he inquires whether Master Korien of Cuke is available.

(regardless of whether or not it is that night or the morning)

Rikoro offers a regretful expression and says to Korien, "Unfortunately I have been called to errand by Lord Odasart. I've certainly enjoyed my time with you and the guild as a translator, but I am being asked to travel to Minarsas and so I will have to offer my resignation. I should be available for the next couple of days if my services are needed. Hopefully in a few months time when I return you will still have need of me."

## 2-HALÁNÈ-720 TASHAL, KALDOR

2ND WATCH [COLD, CLOUDY, NORTH WIND]

While breaking her fast (after an hour of morning sickness), Berina remembers that the Annual Halian Banquet of Delight Festival started yesterday and it is not likely she will be able to get an audience with the Aramia until the 8<sup>th</sup> when it is over.

When Berina remembers the banquet, she says to Davas: "Damn! I forgot about the Banquet of Delight Festival. Not only will I not get to see the Aramia, but I'll miss the festival as well." Grinning broadly, she finishes: "Prepare yourself, my love. Tonight will be like no other!"

With a look of mock horror, Davas throws his right arm across his face and slumps to the floor in a theatrical faint. "... nooooo!". He watches Berina through one partly closed eye, waiting for her surprise to turn to ... [OOC who knows with Berina :) ] As she lunges for him, he slips away, regains his feet and tickles her mercilessly, before they both subside, exhausted. Giving her a huge grin, he says quietly "I think we can handle it".

\* \* \*

The next morning, Berina goes across the street to see her father. "Father, Lord Odasart is sending Davas and myself to Minarsas to look into some trouble there. Do you know anyone in Minarsas that could help us with information and/or aid?"

"I have met the weaponcrafter, Margan of Loda, but I know naught of him," he answers.

Berina says, "Well, that's something anyway. I'll stop and see him and give him your regards. Thank you father."

Berina continues, "I have an investment in the Garb and Flail. I will have the innkeeper...Jaril of Varsin...re-invest any profits, but if he needs to have a decision made in my absence, I'll instruct him to come see you. You have complete discretion to decide as you see fit."

\* \* \*

Going through her belongings to decide what to take with her to Minarsas, it occurs to Berina that the second belt she thought she had, is nowhere to be found. Muttering to herself, she says: "Damn. I could have sworn I had another belt. I'm going to have to buy one. I should buy some gloves while I'm at it."

Putting on the belt she does have...which has her pouch...Berina puts 150d in the pouch. As she's about to leave, she realizes that she hasn't seen any trail rations. Carefully emptying her pack onto her bed, she takes the pack with her as she leaves.

Stopping at the shop of Master Diryn of Erlesh...whom Berina has met at the temple of Halea...she says in greeting: "Good morning Master Diryn. How's your beautiful wife and your five children?"

"Harumph. Not here at the moment." he replies, looking at her pointedly.

Aware of his philandering...as is almost everyone else...Berina says in an almost sing-song voice: "I'm in need of a belt and a pair of gloves. Can you help me?"

Having long since given up on Berina, Diryn clears his throat and gets down to business: "I am afraid the only such items I have were made specifically for someone. I am sorry. I would suggest you check with Arbin of Elway, but I am sure you have heard what he thinks of us Haleans. You will have to look around the rest of the marketplace, and hope for the best."

Making the rounds of the Mercantylers and Clothiers, and having no luck, Berina ends up at the shop of Master Melsene of Irin. He has no belts or gloves either, but she thinks to ask him: "Master Melsene, I've heard that you travel to Minarsas every year for the Wool Fair. I have to go to Minarsas in a few days. At this time of year, I'll have to walk overland. How long would you say it'll take me to get there?"

"Well that depends on several things," he answers, "with the best of conditions, I can make it in five days. Bad weather could double that time and, if you know not where you are going, I would double it again for the amount of time you spend going in the wrong direction."

"Thank you Master Melsene." Berina says as she goes in search of travel rations. Cutting across the center of Mangai Square, she comes across the stall of a glover. Sending a silent prayer of thanks to Halea, she looks over the stock.

"Can I help you, Miss?" the glover asks.

"Yes." Berina says. "I particularly like this doeskin pair and these russet ones. How much for both?"

Pausing a second and blinking once, the glover says: "That would be fifty five pence, Miss."

"I'll take them." Berina says, and counts out fifty five pence. "Thank you."

"Thank YOU!" the glover responds.

Berina puts the russet gloves on, and stows the doeskin pair in her now somewhat emptier pouch. She sets off to see about Trail rations.

\* \* \*

After talking with her father, Berina goes to the Garb and Flail. Speaking to Jaril she tells him: "Jaril, I have to go out of town...possibly until the next Minarsas wool fair..., so while I'm gone, if there are any positive returns on my investment, I want all profits re-invested. If, for any reason, you need a decision made while I'm gone, see my father, Obras of Kyfa. His shop is on the south side of Querina Road, east of Mangai Square. He has full discretion to act on my behalf in my absence."

\* \* \*

Once she's done at the Garb and Flail, Berina goes across the street to the temple of Halea and see whoever is in charge of making appointments to see the Aramia.

Stepping outside the Garb and Flail, Berina can see an angry crowd protesting the immoral practices of the "Banquet of Delight Festival" and abusing anyone trying to enter the temple by assaulting them...in the worst cases, even throwing rocks.

"STOP!" Berina shouts. "YOU'RE BREAKING THE KINGS PEACE. DISBURSE BEFORE I SUMMON THE GUARD!"

Berina...being in pants and shirt since she's not going to work...will uncoil the whip from around her waist and check that her knife is ready in it's scabbard as she shouts at the mob.

Suddenly the crowd gets very quiet as they turn toward her...

"What business is this of yours!" one shouts.

"Go home before you get yourself hurt!" cries another.

"What are you, one of those hedonists?" shouts a third.

Berina counts at least twenty angry faces turned toward her and it looks like the least little thing will turn the mob into ravenous beast wishing to destroy that which gets into its way.

Berina walks over to the one who said 'What business is this of yours!' in a casual way, confidence oozing out of every pore, and says in a conversational tone of voice that is still loud enough to be heard by the rest of those present: "I work for Lord Fugys Odasart, the Royal Weaponcrafter. That makes me an employee of the Crown. It is my duty to uphold the King's Peace when I see it violated. That's what business it is of mine." Addressing the crowd as a whole, she says in as soothing a tone of voice as she can manage: "I don't want to take the time necessary to deal with this...and you don't want to buy the kind of trouble you all know will come down on you if you persist with what you're doing. Now you've made your point...you don't like Haleans. I ask you...on behalf of the Crown, and for your own best interests...go away from here." She then stands there with a stance and expression that says 'I'm waiting.' Berina is hyper-alert...ready to dodge and move in such a way as to minimize the number of opponents who can come at her at the same time.

Someone yells, "You have no authority here!"

Another shouts, "Upstart peasant who is full of herself, she is!"

Someone in the crowd throws a rock at her and three more quickly follow.

[+1 oratory]

Berina, having gotten the whip out, is prepared to lay about her with it if anyone tries to close with her. She will be dodging thrown rocks. If it looks like she could be surrounded if stays where she is, she'll retreat, backing up, up Kald Way...all the way to the south gate of the enclosure of Caer Elend if necessary.

The first rock misses her left arm by barely an inch. The second misses the same arm by a wider margin (4 inches). The third hits her in the stomach for a minor bruise (9 IP). The fourth rock passes cleanly over her head. The one that Berina has already closed with has not had time to react yet.

Berina punch the one she's closed with in the torso (largest target area), and then lay about her with the whip. This ought to make

# ACT 4 SCENE 1 PAGE 8

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THEM spend their time dodging. The whip is already in hand, so throwing the punch can't take more than a split second before she starts laying about her with it.

Of the twenty-odd rioters, about half of them follow after Berina. Of those, three throw more rocks and the one standing next to her swings his fist at her. He misses but Berina's blow strikes him on his right hip. He appears to be stunned into momentary inaction.

One of the rocks passes over Berina's left shoulder, one passes her left hip by a wide margin and the third passes well over her head...to crash through the window of the Garb and Flail.

For the moment, the rest of the rioters following Berina appear to be waiting for opportunity.

Berina slowly backs up Kald Way toward the south gate to the compound of the castle. She is alert for thrown rocks or other weapons, but she is going slow so as to try to draw the mob after her. The intent, obviously, is to suck them into a position where the castle guard will have to quell the riot.

[OOO: Yeah, yeah, I know. Berina will get swept up with the others, even though it'll be obvious that she's the victim. The rock through the window of her investment has really P.O.'d her!<g>]

The one who swung at Berina in the last moment is still dealing with the new pain in his hip so does nothing at this time. Three others throw rocks: the first passes high over her right shoulder, the second passes high over her head and goes through the window of the shop behind her, and the third also goes over her head and bounces off the wall of the shop.

At this moment, the guards at the Kald gate notice the commotion and rush toward the mob yelling, "Halt! You are all under arrest for disturbing the King's peace."

Five of the rioters rush off in various directions, four stop where they are and the last appears to realize the seriousness of what he has been doing and breaks down sobbing. The guards surround Berina and the five remaining rioters to lead them off under guard to the castle dungeon.

Berina goes off quietly without resisting.

\* \* \*

Josrel plans to speak with the Ibarti when the Ibarti has time . In the Morning on his way to the courts Josrel will stop by the Temple and ask for an audience with the Ibarti at his convenience.

Josrel is told Ibarti Erdaris can see him now.

Josrel enters the Ibartis office and bows to his Teacher. "Teacher, I was present at the meeting with Lord Worton Harabor and have come to inform you of the meeting and of the task that has been set upon myself, and my companions. In attendance were myself, Berina of Kyfa, Davis of Fainovirs, Isiel of Laelin, Rikoro of Drelin and Thrird of Tynath. The Lord Odasart was also in attendance."

Josrel pauses to gather his thoughts then begins. "Lord Harabor and some of his Associates became concerned with what they

saw as a lack of communication with possible Heirs to the Throne."

"Lord Harabor and Lady Lussie Harabor had some people investigate the absence of the Earl Dariune of Kiban whom they managed to save from some plot against the Earl from his son. This son has been sent to the Chelmarch."

Josrel pauses again: "That investigation revealed to the Lord and Lady Harabor a chain of events as they put it. Which involves a rogue Shek P'var, one Tesial of Holsare, who had some correspondence with the Earls son. This Tesial of Holsare has been killed according to Lord Harabor."

Josrel pauses again: "Lord Harabor then goes on to tell us of a Sindarin by the name of Divlena of Laelin who happens to be related to Isiel of Laelin. Lord Harabor was introduced to Divlena during the investigation. It seems that the Bastune clan has some hatred towards the Laelin clan, killed Divlena's family and sold her into slavery to the Chelni."

"Sir Erdais Bastune and Sir Anseri Walorn were close associates of Tesial and when Tesial was killed fled to Minarasas, and have changed their names so Lord Harabor believes. Divlena who was in the company of Berina of Kyfa at the time, left her company to travel to Minarasa to find the Bastune clan."

"Lord Harabor then introduces another accomplice of Tesiels, someone known as Evida the Bearer of the Loam, whom the Lord Harabor believes was Tesial's Master. This Evida also is said to be in Minarasas from Kiban so says the Lord Harabor."

"Then we were informed that Armenton of Soril has fled to Minarasas as well. Who as Lord Harabor states has developed a hatred for the Kyfa clan."

"Lord Harabor's clan is from Minarasas and still has clan there and is concerned about some of the changes that are occurring there. It seems that some laws have been changed which has enraged the Khuzdal, the Shek P'var and the Temples. In discussion with Lord Odasart, Lord Harabor believes that Earl Declean Caldeth is being influenced by the above mentioned enemies or the organizations that are supporting them."

"The Lord Harabor has asked the invited group to look into matters in Minarasas and try to bring a resolution to the matter by the Wool Faire"

"These are the words of Lord Harabor as I recall them." Josrel waits for any response from the Ibarti.

"As I believe I have told you before, you need to get your facts straight before you tell others and you must stop giving information freely to those who have no need for it. In this particular case, I know the beginning of your tale and you have several of the particulars wrong. In addition, it is a tale told in the strictest confidence, both when it was told to me and I assume so now. All you needed to tell me was that some of the nobility are sending you on a mission and let me concern myself with getting the particulars and compensation for your services. So what is it you are asking of me at this time?" asks Ibarti Erdaris

Josrel says, "Teacher I was not claiming the facts I told you were true or false, merely reporting what he told me. And I realize that I will have to find out the truth of matters. I also told you to

get your comments on the items stated, which I now know some of them to be inaccurate. Can I ask you of which of the statements are inaccurate?"

"Very well...from the start, you say 'Lord Harabor this' and 'Lord Harabor that' when in truth, everything you say of Lord Harabor is true of Lord Odasart as related to us in confidence at a dinner some time ago at Lord Odasart's mansion," the Ibarti answers. "That makes your statements incorrect and unnecessary since you and I were both at that dinner and it makes me suspect the truth of what you learned of this meeting. In addition, I need not know anything about any assumptions and opinions until they become facts."

"I would like to ask of you also if there is a Temple to Save-K'Nor in Minarasas and if so is it possible to spend some time there to investigate matters there?"

"There is no such temple or priest," The Ibarti answers, "but you and your wife have my permission to follow the direction of the gentry in investigating these matters. However, I remind you once again, you are to collect information and act as an impartial judge, not to give information out freely nor to let your emotions sway you."

Bowing to the Ibarti, Josrel says: "Thank you for your guidance Teacher. I go to make my preparations to leave for Minarasas. Shall I finish the day at the courts or have you found another to replace me?"

"Make your preparations," Ibarti Erdaris says. "I will deal with the courts."

\* \* \*

Josrel will bring all of his equipment and clothing which isn't much. He will also stop and purchase some parchment or vellum whichever is cheaper.

Josrel finds that the price of 11d 3f per 15"x20" sheet. Vellum is at 12d per 30"x40" sheet.

Josrel will purchase 2 sheets of Vellum.

[OOO: As you use this, you need to tell me exactly what you write. I'll assume you write in a 12 point font and there are half inch margins. An 8"x11" sheet is 88 sq. inches minus the margins is 70 sq. inches of available writing space per page. You now have the equivalent of 2400 sq. inches of vellum resulting in 27 pages (or 1909 square inches) of writing space.]

Josrel bows once again to the Ibarti and heads for home.

"Lillia lets get our things for the trip packed." Josrel says to Lillia. "Then lock up and stop by your mothers and tell her we will be away for a few days so she doesn't get worried about us. I was also thinking of investing some money in her butcher shop. What do you think about that, my dear? I would like to speak to her about that while were there. Then head over to Berina's house and see how the others are doing."

"I think you missed your chance when you replied not to her offer before," Lillia says. "By now she will have gotten a new investor. Perhaps the opportunity will come again in the future."

\* \* \*

Rikoro visits Master Lorin's apothecary to try and sell off his remaining agrimony and horsetail.

He is offered 5d 2f for the 12 doses of agrimony and 15d for the 5 doses of horsetail.

Rikoro accepts the offer and exchanges the herbs for the coin.

2) Rikoro looks into purchasing a waterproof pack (that is if his current one isn't already?) and waterproof scroll tube to keep any documents he finds along the way extra secure.

Waterproofing his existing pack will take 10d and he finds a new, waterproofed mapcase for 36d.

"I can put the coating on today and it should be dry enough for use on the morn of the fourth," the clothier tells him.

"Very well please see to it Master Clothier.", Rikoro says.

3) Rikoro will look into purchasing a winter cloak since the season will be upon them.

He does not find a readymade cloak (they are always custom made).

Once he finds out they are tailored crafted, Rikoro inquires, "How much would it cost to make one for myself and how long would you require?"

"For a man of your stature, a hooded russet-wool cloak will cost 231d and take two days to make. If times are hard, a hooded serge-wool cloak will cost 93d and also take two days to make. A hooded leather cloak will cost 385d and takes 4 days to make. There are many other variations according to your needs," the clothier tells him.

Letting out a bit of a dramatic sigh, Rikoro let's the following roll off his tongue, "Times are far more then hard for me I fear. The serge-wool will have to do. The only thing I am looking for is something to keep me warm and somewhat dry. Though if I have a choice in the color I would prefer either earth-brown or forest-green."

"As it happens, the one I have is in forest green," he replies.

Adding to the end of the conversation, Rikoro inquires, "With the purchase of the cloak and waterproofing to my pack would you be willing to lower the price of the mapcase to half what you quoted? For a total of 120d?"

"No," he answers, "36d is a firm price."

Nodding simply, Rikoro replies, "Fair enough. Then just the two items will do."

Rikoro removes the three books from his pack along with his coin purse and pays the clothier for the cost owed. "Unfortunately I don't have anything else to store my things in, would you happen to have something temporary? If not I shall have to leave the remainder of the items behind."

"I can lend you this beat up linen bag," the clothier answers, "it does not look like much but it should suffice until you return."

After making the purchase, Rikoro heads to the townhouse to inform the group of his ongoings and plans, letting whoever is present know, "I will be ready to leave on the fourth. Since I

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have left my job as a translator, for the next couple of days I will be at the cottage I am now responsible for. It is south of Tashal about an hours walk near Kaldel manor if I am needed."

Once at his forty acres of land, Rikoro seeks out Terrefan to let him know, "I shall be here for the next few days. And then I will be away on errand for Lord Odasart. It could be as long as until spring I fear, though hopefully much shorter."

Afterwards for the remaining time at the cottage Rikoro helps out where needed, but spends his time in study on his new spell. Also during that time Rikoro requests an audience with Lord Rikeonton to let him know how long he will be absent for and where he can be reached if needed.

4) Depending on what coin he has left if it's sufficient to do so he will deposit some with the usurer/bank.

\* \* \*

The Khuzdul wakes up on his last morning at the Spurs, he gathers up his belongings and heads upstairs. When he sees Master Halime he offers a nod. "I wish to thank ya fer letting me work here, ja? I be much appreciating and if'n I ever come back this way, and you be needin' some helplike, I be happy to lend a hand."

"You are welcome," Master Halime replies. "You have been a hard worker and have not caused any problems so I will look forward to seeing you return."

Looking outside as the cold wind blows by, "Master Halime, we be having any old cloaks or things that old guests be leaving behind you not mind if I take? I think my clothes should be alright, but cann be to careful 'bout freezin an all, ja?"

Master Halime looks over the common room. At this early hour, the only ones present are a woman sleeping in the corner and a group of young lads who are loudly planning their first "adventure". Halime approaches the group and snatches a hooded cloak from the heaviest one saying, "A little more discretion, lads."

Returning to Thridd, he hands him the cloak and says, "I believe someone has just lost this cloak as luck would have it. You can wear it as long as you mind not a few fleas."

The Khuzdul snickers into his beard as Halime offers the cloak, "Thank yous Master Halime, I be sure if there's any fleas the cold'll kill 'em quicklike, ja?" He offers his hand for a stern shake of Halime's hand, "I be back sometimes, ja?"

With that he moves outside, offering a final wave as he exits. He looks up and down the street, and then shakes the cloak vigorously to try to dislodge any critter residents before pulling it about himself and heading towards Berina's house.

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<sup>i</sup> Quoted items in *italics* are in the Sindarin language.